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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER REQUESTS MEETING WITH  
SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

11. SUMMARY: Deputy Prime Minister Yerbol Orenbayev would like to meet in Washington the last week of November with Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius to seek linkages between the National Institutes of Health and Kazakhstan's new national university. We encourage this meeting, because the university project is consistent with the Government of Kazakhstan's long-standing emphasis on education as a fundamental tool for national development. Further, the desire for educational linkages and contacts with the West is in line with Kazakhstan's long-term goal to develop a national post-Soviet mentality for the future.  
END SUMMARY.

12. Chief Executive Officer of National Medical Holding Almaz Sharman called on the Ambassador on October 14. Sharman, an American citizen who maintains a residence in Bethesda, Maryland, provided extensive documentation on the establishment in Astana of New University, which will likely be officially named Nursultan Nazarbayev University (NNU) in 2010. The initial academic block is already well under construction. Planned to be a comprehensive, world-class university and research center, the initial phase will encompass a School of Public Policy, a School of Engineering, a School of Natural Sciences, and the NNU Health System. The health system will include a Life Sciences Institute (for research), a School of Medicine, and the National Medical Holding. The School of Medicine is already working with Partners Harvard Medical International on a long-term development plan, and is also working to include the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and Duke University. Sharman's immediate goal is to establish relations with the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) with the view of developing a research partnership for the Life Science Institute.

13. Deputy Prime Minister Yerbol Orenbayev, who is well and favorably known to us, and Sharman would like to travel to Washington Thanksgiving week to meet with the Secretary of Health and Human Services (Orenbayev's letter to Secretary Sebelius is in para five below) and senior officials at the NIH. Sharman asked that Embassy Astana make these appointments for them. We said we would be glad to pass this information to Washington, but that Kazakhstan's Embassy in Washington should take responsibility for making the appointment, with the State Department assisting as needed.

14. COMMENT: Although grandiose, the NNU project is consistent with the Government of Kazakhstan's long-standing emphasis on education as a fundamental tool for national development. Further, the desire for educational linkages and contacts with the West is in line with Kazakhstan's long-term goal to develop a national post-Soviet mentality for the future. END COMMENT.

15. BEGIN (LIGHTLY EDITED) TEXT OF LETTER:  
September 30, 2009

Your Excellency  
Kathleen Sebelius  
U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

First, let me congratulate you on your recent appointment as the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services. We hope that in this position you will play an important role in addressing the challenges of global health in addition to domestic issues in the United States.

I am writing this letter to inform you about a new initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan to establish Kazakhstan National University under the auspices of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. One of priorities of the new University will be medical education and biomedical research focusing on stem-cell engineering, molecular biology, nanomedicine, and other areas of cutting-edge biomedical research. This letter is to express our interest in partnership between the new University and the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the areas of biomedical research and training of biomedical scientists.

In mid-November I plan to travel to the United States and would be happy to meet with you and your staff to discuss details of the proposed partnership. In the meantime, please find, below, information with a general description of the project.

Medical School and the University

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The University will be located in Kazakhstan's capital city of Astana. The new permanent campus will be ready in mid-2010 with 120,000 square meters of space for classrooms, teaching labs, wet-lab research, and administrative offices. The University will comprise four major schools: Public Policy, Technology, Natural Sciences, and Biomedicine. The campus will be located immediately adjacent to the National Medical Holding, the region's leading state-of-the-art tertiary-care hospital system with a total 1,200 acute hospital beds. The faculty and students will work closely with leading physicians and biomedical scientists in Kazakhstan. Our goal is to establish this Medical School in Astana in partnership with one of the leading academic centers in the United States. The Government of Kazakhstan is expected to make investments to establish the partnership as part of Kazakhstan's strategy to become a leading center for medical education and biomedical research.

The new Medical School in Astana will adopt the American model of post-baccalaureate medical education where students begin their medical studies after earning a bachelor's degree. In fact, they will be studying towards the USMLE licensing. The graduates will have the opportunity to build their careers as scholars in medical research, education, and patient care and acquire an option to apply for U.S. medical residency programs. The goal is to create a new generation of physician-scientists to assume leadership positions in research, academia, and in health-care settings such as tertiary-care hospitals at the National Medical Holding.

Biomedical Research

We are seeking partnership with NIH in the field of biomedical research. Specifically, we need assistance with establishing a state-of-the-art biomedical facility and developing joint research programs in such areas as cancer and stem-cell biology, cardiovascular and metabolic disorders, the science of ageing, and neurosciences. This is expected to be a long-term program funded by the Government of Kazakhstan.

The Medical School in Astana will be heavily involved in biomedical research. The University expects to appoint 40-50 faculty staff who will be actively involved in research programs. At least half of

these Principal Investigators (PIs) are expected to be Kazakhstan residents, while the rest will be recruited internationally. Each PI will manage a laboratory of 6-8 research staff, the bulk of which will likely be from the region, and comprised of students in medical (MD) and medical-scientist (MD/PhD) training programs, postdoctoral fellows, doctors undertaking research fellowships, and research assistants. The Medical School in Astana hopes to train a significant number of clinical researchers from its program every year, thereby contributing to Kazakhstan's growing pool of clinical researchers.

We sincerely believe that this project provides a unique opportunity to improve health and quality of life in Kazakhstan and the countries of the former Soviet Union. Physician-scientists play a unique role in modern medicine, having received extensive training in both medicine and research. Students entering the Medical School in Astana are expected to be among the best and brightest and highly motivated. Graduates of the Medical School in Astana will be pioneers, as they are the core of a new generation of clinical researchers in Kazakhstan and the former Soviet Union who will spearhead efforts to develop new treatments for diseases and better methods of delivering healthcare, and contribute significantly to alleviating the suffering of patients in Kazakhstan and around the world. Partnership with NIH would enhance the long-term positive aspects of the proposed program.

We recognize that this proposal will need your careful review. We would be happy to provide additional information you may need.

Sincerely,  
Yerbol Orynbayev  
Deputy Prime Minister

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